

Thematic analysis on older people understanding of elder abuse: Directions for theoretical development

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore older people's understanding of elderly abuse; the reasons for such act and the impact on their feelings and physical well-being. A total of 18 elderly persons (13 females and 5 males) were purposively selected and have participated in the discussion. There were two mixed groups of both males and females. The first group consisted of 6 females and 3 males. Participants were between the age of 65 and 72. The second group consisted of 7 females and 2 males. The main data source consisted of in-depth interviews through focus group discussions and one-on-one interview with the investigator and informants as co-participants. The study confirms the theoretical statement that perceptions on the abuses experienced by the elderly are basically governed by their respective sociocultural experiences from their younger years. Majority of the participants defined and categorized elderly abuse based on identified experiences and grounded on their cultural background. What is classified as elderly abuse for some may not hold true for others. The belief of the majority is that abuse is composed of any action that diminishes the respect and dignity duly given to an elderly person. Consequently, the study validates one of the assertions of the Elderly Caregiver Attachment Theory that elderly may experience different types and degree of abuse depending on their perceptions on elderly abuse, living condition, level of powerlessness, and dependence.

Keywords: elder abuse, dependency, powerlessness, focus group discussion

I. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, state law has its own definition of elderly abuse, but it does not have a definition that is universally acceptable worldwide. In fact, the phrase "elder abuse" come in varied forms. For instance, National Center Elder Abuse in the USA (1998) characterized elderly abuse as including: (a) emotional or psychological abuse, the infliction of anguish, emotional pain, or distress; (b) neglect, the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties; (c) physical abuse, use of physical force that may lead to injury, physical discomfort, or impairment; (d) sexual abuse, non-consensual sexual contact of any sort with an older person; (e) self-neglect, the behaviors of an elderly person that threatens his/her health or safety; (f) financial or material exploitation, the illegal or

improper use of an older person's funds, property, or assets; and (g) abandonment, the desertion of an older person by an individual who has assumed responsibility for providing care or by a person with physical custody of an older person. Between the areas of elder abuse, the first six types are frequently included in other studies like UK, Australia and even Japan (Kosberg, Lowenstein, Garcia, & Biggs, 2003).

In the Philippines, a single or repeated act, or a lack of appropriate action that occurs within any relationship which has an expectation of trust and it causes distress or harm to an elderly is considered as elderly abuse (Guruge, Tiwari, & Lucea, 2010). This definition does not include abuse by strangers or self-neglect. A review of the literature indicate that countries have dissimilar perceptions on elderly abuse (Boldy, Horner, Crouchley,

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& Davey, 2005; Brownell & Heiser, 2006; Chokkanathan & Lee, 2005; Daly & Jogerst, 2001, 2005; Desy & Prohaska, 2008; Golding, Yozwiak, Kinstle, & Marsil, 2005; Hsieh, Wang, Yen, & Liu, 2008; Jogerst, Daly, Brinig, Dawson, Schmuck, & Ingram, 2003; Jogerst, Daly, Dawson, Peek-Asa, & Schmuck, 2006; Laumann, Leitsch, & Waite, 2008; Leedahl & Ferraro, 2007; Manthorpe, Biggs, McCreadie, Tinker, Hills, et al., 2007; Nusbaum, Mistretta, & Wegner, 2007; Oh, Kim, Martins, & Kim, 2006; Pathman, Viera, & Newton, 2008; Phua, Ng, & Seow, 2008; Reay & Browne, 2002; Richardson, Kitchen, & Livingston, 2002, 2004). Elderly Abuse is a complicated issue that is affected by diverse sociocultural values and dynamics within the family that modifies overtime.

This study aims to confirm the claims of the Elderly Caregiver Theory as developed by the researchers relative to elderly caregivers and elderly abuse. The theory asserts that perceptions of the elderly on elderly abuse differ depending on their living condition, level of powerlessness and dependence. The literature in this study claims that if the family is confronted with poverty, the value of respect and love are less recognized and diminished and so domestic violence can happen. World Health Organization (2014) also cited that the incidence of elderly abuse is high among persons who are unable to care physically for themselves, impoverished and economically dependent on others. Furthermore, those elderly who were treated badly today are parents who neglected or mistreated their children when they were small so received treatment when grow old or they did something to deserve it (law of Karma). Considering that the theory is recently crafted and unpublished, no existing studies can confirm the claim. Hence, this study sought to confirm the assumptions of the theory.

II. PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE

This study affirms the theory emerged from thematic analysis. Validation or confirmability is consolidated as a vital factor in research (Vasquez, 2014 a, b; Martins & Haddad, 2000; Vituri & Matsuda, 2009; Perroca & Gaidzinski, 1998; Rocha, 2008), keeping in mind the end goal to show the capacity of what the study needs to catch or uncover. Representativity and extension of each element in the investigated phenomenon contributes to its verification, as well as the establishment of the domain of interest and dimensions of each category or theme that is revealed in the study, that is, to demonstrate that the interpretations that the researchers made "represent the 'subjective or objective (Vasquez, 2014 a, b) and are more than the product of the fertile imagination of the researchers" (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). This process includes revisiting the elements of the study to confirm whether there is

correspondence between what was elaborated and what was experienced by the actors, that have relations with the content and the proposed associations (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Some highlighted difficulties in the performance of this validation type in situations where the findings would lead to conflict upon confirmation (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000).

III. DOMAIN OF INQUIRY

This study is intended to elicit older people's understanding of elderly abuse, the reasons for such act and the impact to their feelings and physical well-being.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The intention is to have a more extensive understanding of the insights of the elderly with regards to elderly abuse. It described further the types of abusive behaviors and the reasons for such behaviors. The main data source consisted of focus group discussions, and the focus of the interactions were based from the analysis of the in-depth one-on-one key informant interviews. The focus group discussion was employed to collect views, perceptions concerning elder abuse and has explored the reasons for such abuse. When the experience is poorly defined or conceptualized especially on the issue of elder abuse, thematic analysis was appropriated to delve deeper into the lived experiences of the elderly. The critical truths are grounded on from the participants' experiences, thoughts and feelings.

A total of 18 elderly persons (13 females and 5 males) being purposively selected took part in the discussion. The mean age average is close to 70 years old. As far as their marital status is concerned, 1 single, 8 married, 7 widowed, and 2 separated. There were 2 mixed groups of older men and women together. The first group* consisted of 6 female and 3 male. The Participants were between 65 and 72 years old. The second group** consisted of 7 females and 2 males. The participants were between age 65 and 87 years old. Grouping were based from geographic location of their addresses. The socioeconomic background of the elderly varied to some extent, but most of them belonged to low SES, and some were middle class family. All of them are members of the Senior citizen organization of their barangay.

The research study was conducted in Zamboanga City, where two barangays; Ayala* and Baliwasan** are purposively chosen to be the specific areas of study. The preparatory work was carried out late January, 2012 which includes: (a) formation and training of the research team; (b) securing permission from local social worker and barangay officials; and (c) developing a guide for focus group discussions. The research team

composed of 3 professional teachers with the primary author as the team leader. They were chosen on the basis of their previous experiences as data collectors of local researches done in their respective places. They were trained as to the conduct, main objective and process of the study. The researchers facilitated the interview while the members of the research team were responsible for taking the demographic profile of the respondents, invitation for the participants, preparation for the site where the focus group and individual multiple interviews were conducted. They also assisted in taking the picture and video recording. Consents were taken before the engagement of all forms of recording.

The potential participants were identified by a member of the research team residing in the site of the study. Written consent was obtained, and the participants willingly agreed to participate in the study. They were assured of the confidentiality of the answers in the interview and their anonymity.

A semi-structured and interview guide, comprising open-ended questions were used during data collection. Questions focused on participants understanding of the abuse, perceptions and the reasons of their experience on abuse.

The focus group sessions lasted 1 ½ to 2 hours. With the permission of the participants, the 3*/3** sessions were tape-recorded, video-taped and transcribed. The participants were free to express their feelings and personal opinions. Exploring personal opinions is a projective technique to abstract personal experience expressed in the third person point of view. There was enough time for the participants to talk to each other and exchange thoughts. In particular, no person could be detected who remained silent all the time. In addition to the moderator, 2 members of the team were present to assist and record their observations. After the emotional sharing, the participants were debriefed to ease the distress and reduce the psychological impact on their well-being (Polit & Beck, 2004). Psychological therapy or debriefing has been deployed as a single-session intervention. After the session, almost all of the elderly expressed utmost satisfaction as participants.

Qualitative content analysis was utilized to analyze the interview text. Qualitative content analysis' overall aim is to search for logical patterns of ideas, utterances, thoughts and beliefs (Polit, & Hungler, 1999). Overlaps occur in the procedures of qualitative work which is composed of data collection, preparation, analysis and interpretation (Burnard, 1995). The data was filtered to a large extent through the lens of the researchers' subjective interpretation. Tapes were transcribed, and each listened to at least twice more to capture exact words, phrases etc.

The authors independently analyzed the text by utilizing various steps that includes the descriptive structure of the message and interpretative reading. First, the transcripts were read to obtain insight on the meaning. Second, the text was divided into units with meaning and data reduction was done to elicit the units of general meaning and thereafter bracketed interpretation that has relevance to the purpose of the study. Third, determined themes from clusters of meaning and verify the finding if "ring true". Verification is important to lessen bias with the results or findings therefore interrater reliability was employed (Berg, Erlingsson, & Saveman, 2001).

Interrater Reliability in thematic analysis is concerned with the ability of being objective in classifying meanings with appropriate themes extracted from the data by outside persons. A high level of reliability in classifying categories is indicated by a high degree of agreement between 2 independent judges. Generally a level of 80 percent agreement indicates an acceptable level of reliability and 66.7 percent, the minimum requirements (White, Mirza-Babaei, McAllister, & Good, 2011). The researchers invited two nursing research professors with a fairly compatible comprehensive ability to list common themes they could detect from the responses of the participants with regards to their perceptions and reasons of abuse. There was no prior connection between the independent interraters and the study, so it significantly reduces the chance of any biases to influence the outcome. After rigorous readings and review of data, there was a comparison done by the researchers with each other. Included in the list of themes are concepts cited by both interraters. The researchers adapted the calculation method from Hamilton (2003) where the interrater reliability would be $\text{number of common themes} / \text{lowest number of submission} \times 100 = 6/8 \times 100\%$ is 85.71% meaning there is true agreement.

A detailed write-up of each focus group discussions and multiple individual interviews were done. These were based from notes taken and listening to tape-recording of the focus group discussion. The researchers derived, categorized and highlighted from the detailed notes, themes that emerged.

Ethical Considerations. Ethical considerations was scrutinized by the scientific committee of college. During the course of the study, the university research ethics committee was not yet organized, thus the ethical merit of the study are reviewed by the technical committee of the college. These include: anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, researchers' potential impact on the participants and vice versa. Strategies to enhance ethical practice and trustworthiness were employed throughout

the course of the study and were constantly monitored.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the discussion when the participants were asked about elder abuse their perceptions were mostly physical abuse in nature, yet considered not a pressing issue. They complained also on the services and benefits entitled to senior citizens. When participants were asked whether they have heard of the term “elder abuse”, nine of the respondents claimed to have heard from friends and on television. Older women are more likely to have heard the issue rather than the older men participants.

Perceptions of Elder Abuse. Many of the participants were able to mention the forms of abuse such as physical, emotional or verbal abuse, financial abuse and cited an example for each. When asked what they understand from the word abuse, out of 18 respondents 7 of them mentioned physical abuse, 7 emotional or verbal abuse and 4 claimed financial exploitation. Nobody mentioned about sexual abuse and neglect. Most of the participants do not like the term, “elder abuse” they considered it as a very strong word and describe only to the extreme case of physical abuse. Substantial minorities feel the term abuse as a sensitive and intimate topic one that people will hide it for emotional reasons such as shame, denial and causes distress talking about it. They believed, “home shame should not be made public”. As revealed from the focus group discussions, physical abuse is seen with one male participant who claimed to be hit, shove and pushed by son if drunk, but unable to report for the reason he does not like any trouble anymore. Quite a number of older female participants verbalized being insulted, yelled and shouted by their daughters, son-in-law and even grandchildren. They were afraid to disclose because they are family members. According to them revealing the incidents would bring more problems instead of solving it. In fact, a few said it is acceptable because they are old and it's natural that members of the family may sometimes lose their patience and respect.

The following themes emerged as perceived reasons for the occurrences of elderly abuse: (a) economic status and dependence; (b) child rearing practices; (c) diminishing love and respect for elders; (d) powerlessness and hopelessness; (e) government's contribution; and (f) acceptance of old age and death

The abuser is typically a family member taking care of the elderly person. There are many different reasons why elderly abuses occur. It is important to note that every experience is unique. Majority of the respondents claimed that family members are treating them badly because they are old, worthless that can no longer help

the family. The caregivers lack respect toward seniors because they are viewed as a waste scarce resources. With the changing structure of the society, the older persons have lost their traditional role and respect.

Another reason which almost all the participants agreed was that the younger generation looked at the elder family members as liability, powerless and dependent which all the more make them vulnerable to harassment, insults verbal aggression and neglect.

Economic Status and Dependence. Most of the focus group discussants shared this comment that:

Abuso... si nuay tu pension; sen pati pondo nah! Abusa kontigo. (Abuse... if you have no pension; no money even savings... you will experience abuse).

The elderly perceived that abuse would not happen if they have enough resources. They added that if only they had prepared themselves financially for their future as elderly, they would not experience such abuse. As elaborated by this:

Si tiene sen nuay abuso. Pureso iyo tiene ta isconde sen. Ta tiene iyo miedo me anak abusa komigo si nuay iyo nada. (If we have money there will be no abuse. That's why I make sure I will have my own savings. I am afraid my children will tend to abuse me if I have nothing).

Low income, poverty and advanced age, socioeconomic factors were significantly associated with reports of neglect and abuse (Cupitt, 1997). Some elderly claimed that they have been good parents and that their children lost their love and care for them now they are old and because of financial reasons. The elderly believed that the abuse is grounded on economic reasons. If only resources are abundant, they will not experience the abuse. Most of them described that:

Kabar kita dale el amor pati atensiyon, ara vieja ya nuay mas ya kita nada. Si tiene kita pension hindi sila man boka kanatun. (After giving all our love and attention to our children, now that we are old we are disregarded. I am sure if we have pension the children will not verbally abuse us).

However, those who own assets and properties accordingly are at risk of being abused through financial exploitation by their younger relatives. Kemp and Mosqueda (2005) cited an older adult who possessed

assets is vulnerable to financial abuse or undue influenced from others. The undue influence may be exhibited with the creation of direct dependency, becoming overly involved in another individual's life, another person who takes advantage of the vulnerability of an elderly or intimidation.

Rearing Practices and Abuse. Some elderly recalled their faulty rearing practice might have contributed to why they are abused. They believed that their children are getting back at them or they have not fulfilled their job well as parents as evidenced by the statement:

Asigura se kilaya kitaya kwidaw kun diatun mga anak. Nuay se susede komigo. Ese abuso akel ta supla kunel vieja kay nuay nada. Hindi se susede komigo. (It will depend on how we rear our children. In my case, I have not experienced any forms of abuse. And what I know this word abuse is referred to those older persons who are being hit because they are useless. That will never happen to me).

As indicated in the Confucian teachings and principles in life, each knows exactly how they would like their own children to treat them when they become old. It is emphasized in teaching to value respect to those who gave us life and reared to be God-fearing. Dowd (1975; 1980) used the exchange theory in social gerontology to explain how aging affects exchange relationships. Based on the tenets of exchange theory, people desire to profit from social interaction with others and that profit consists of a perception that the reward coming from the interchange outweighs the costs. The ability to profit from an exchange depends on the exchange resources that the actors bring to the exchange. When resources are reasonably equal, then a mutually satisfying interdependence may emerge. However, if one of the actors has substantially fewer exchange resources, then the actor's ability to profit from the exchange can be sharply restricted. As claimed by the elderly, negative consequences may happen if they are financially incapacitated.

Sen el rason hindi kanatun abuso. Si mucho kita sen hinde mga anak abuso; si nuay nada hindi sila kwida kanatun. (It's money that will keep us away from being abused, if we have more money our children will not abuse us. If we have nothing, nobody will take care of us).

Diminishing Love and Respect for Elders. Through the

years, some children diminish or lost their love, care and respect for their elders. When these children get married, their concern is more focused with their families and experience stress which were not experienced before. The remuneration may tend to be a contributory factor why family members abuse their elderly intentionally or unintentionally. The in-laws who have no direct affiliation of the family treat the elderly as "the other" or "etic" (outsider), and maybe a projection of their personal feeling being treated of as an outsider before. Poor direct affiliation maybe equated with less responsibility and thus in-laws most of the time, may not care much for the elderly. As stated by one female discussant:

El mga anak ta respeta se, pero si ta casa ya ta keda sila otro. Tiene vez ese mga marido del anak el ta abuso kanatun. Igual me anak mujer nuay ele trabaho, su marido malklase komigo nuay iyo cosa ta pwede ase kay ta keda iyo kanila. Sila ta dale komigo come. (Well our children respect us, but when they marry they become different. Sometimes it's our son-in-law who tends to be abusive with their words. In my case, my daughter who is not working, her husband does not treat me well. I cannot do anything because I am staying with them and they are the one providing my basic needs).

The issues of intolerance among daughters on how their mothers are being treated by their husbands have caused a lot of troubles in most homes and had led to abuse in several forms. Some elderly, when they were younger parents, made sure that they had done their responsibilities well because they feared that they might experience mistreatment if they have not treated their children well. A male discussant shared:

Driver iyo ta prikura iyo dale cosa sila necesita kay si keda iyo viejo; dale tamen sila cosa iyo nesecita. Tiene iyo miedo abuso sila komigo. (As a driver, I make sure that my children's needs were provided so that when I am old they will also provide my needs. I am afraid to be abused by my children).

Social exchange theory offers a plausible explanation to these statements. Nye (1999) cited that individuals get motivation through self-interest and are looking to maximize the expenses that they cause in a relationship. It insists that relationships are controlled by a reciprocity norm, "there is a need to reciprocate favors gained from

others. Because parents provide shelter, care socialization, food and other necessities to their children; children are expected to reciprocate when they are old, sick and debilitated. This is also supported by Barjose's theory stating that elders believed that karma is one reason for elderly abuse. The way one treats the children is also the way the children will treat you in old age.

Powerlessness and Hopelessness. The elderly discussants poured out their comment:

Viejo, nuay mas nada; hindi mas ta pwede ayuda na pamilya. (We are old, useless and can no longer be of help to the family).

Being old and useless is a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness experienced by all elderly in this study. Some informants experienced compulsory tolerance of the situation – a concept of powerlessness. Though some of their children shout at them unintentionally, due to the hearing impairment of elders, these are most of the times misinterpreted. Most discussants lamented that:

Todo dia sus ta grita komigo kay bungol daw iyo. Ta ase se sila rason, el verdad kay vieja ya iyo, nuay mas nada kanila. (Every day they are shouting at me and said they do that because I cannot hear them. I feel they are just saying that as a reason. The truth is because I am very old. I am already useless to them).

There are times wherein shouting to elders are done intentionally due to the perceived uselessness, powerlessness and helplessness among elderly. They are more confident of doing these things knowing that the elderly cannot be protecting themselves. One old woman said:

Iyo 86 ya, hindi mas ta pwede uhi. Mal klase ese marido mi anak pati su anak mujer. Nuay sus mga respeto, bien makatriste. (Well, in my case I am 86 I cannot hear. My son-in-law and even my granddaughter don't treat me well. They don't respect me. I become lonely).

Stressful relationship and difference in expectations with in-laws will result to abusive behaviors. As presented in the case, a consequence of prolonged misunderstanding and problems in communication between the in-laws and the elderly. Thus, abusive

behaviors are developed from enduring conflictual family relationships. Frailty of an elderly person increases the chance of being abused. As a result of abuse, they experienced depression, worry and anxiety.

The statements of one male elderly sound positive, but metalanguage signals a hidden implication behind each statement:

Na edad di amun, hindi ya kame ta reklama si cosa el tratamiento d amun anak. Si grita sila rabya dehalo ya vieja ya kame. Nuay kame donde anda. Si abuso se mucho beses ya se ya susede komigo. (Actually ma'am at our age we cannot anymore complain. We just accept to whatever treatment done to us by our children. They will shout, get angry we just keep quiet. We are old we have nowhere to go. So, if they call it abuses being shouted many times then I do experience it).

Toby Welch (2010), elderly are perceived as powerless and incompetent. Abusers lack respect toward seniors based on their discrimination of them and felt no guilt for abuse and pain they inflicted. If older persons have accepted this negative views on aging themselves, so they can easily be abused for they think what they receive are deserved and justified.

Blaming the Self Syndrome. Some elders blame their condition (signs and symptoms of old age) on why things happen. This is a classic evidence of powerlessness and hopelessness:

Serca ya kame despidi na mundo.ta perde pa este pasensya del mga anak. Ta abusa kanatun especialmente iyo hindi ta pwede uhi. Normal se tagrita komigo. (We are nearing departure time all the more our children lost their patience to take care of us... We are verbally abuse because we cannot hear anymore and it becomes normal for me to be yelled at).

There is not much literature available to support such evidence. Most of studies have not explored much with this occurrence. The abuse illustrated becomes a normal part of her life and acceptable to keep the family together and free from discord.

Physical Abuse. Some elderly experience physical abuse especially when the abuser or the abused is under the influence of alcohol. The elders are potential subjects for abuse due to their powerlessness, much more when the abusers, and are drunk and the elderly

cannot protect themselves.

However, these elderly are aware of their rights and can identify the correct things to do to safeguard themselves. However, they do not engage in such actions since they want to protect their family from scandal and shame. A concern discussant shared:

Priguta tu kun XXX ta pacha y ta bombya kunele si buracho su anak ombre. Debe reporta na barangay, ese el abuso. (Well you ask XXXX [pointing to the male participant]. He is being kicked, even boxed by his son every time he is drunk. I think that's abuse. He can report that to the barangay).

The elderly persons become more physically and mentally dependent on others as they advance in age especially members of the family. There is an increase in physical abuse. The elderly believe that they are too frail to retaliate when abused. According to the article written by Prof. Luke Gormally (1998), the pervasive negative sense of frailty and dependence among elderly would deny value to their lives and capacity for self-determination. This denial of value is equivalent to a denial of dignity and respect to the older person.

Physical Abuse. The only identified form of abuse by most elderly. Some elderly believed that abuse is only physical and that their experience which does not fall to their operationalized definition is not considered abuse. This maybe brought about by the lack of knowledge of their rights. The following statements support this claim:

Akellos mga vieja ta amara y ta pone na isкуро kuarto tiene ta pone pa kadena daw animal akel ya mira kame na television. (The one we saw on the television old person being tied up and placed in a secluded room, chain like animal as what I've seen on the television then that is abuse).

Seniors who are suffering from mental diseases such as Alzheimer's and Dementia are the most vulnerable to many forms of abuse. As featured in article of Dale, Burns, Panter, & Morris (2001) a nursing aide at an assisted living facility assaulted and mocked a half-naked dementia elderly struggled to flee from her room, and escape from the tormentors as recorded by a hidden camera in the room, is just one of the many situations elderly abuse is published.

Physical Abuse from In-Laws and not from Children. The elderly believed that they cannot be harmed by their children physically. The elderly are very confident on the cultural heritage among Filipinos regarding

closeness of the family. However, they can imagine that physical abuse can be done by the in-laws but not from their children as lamented by female discussant:

Hindi ese susede aki. Diatun anak hindi malo pero si ta casa ya na si burachon pa el marido, makamiedo. Ta resa iyo hindi komigo supla. Mas kere iyo muri ya lang. (That will not happen to us here. Our children are not that cruel, but in-laws well I am not safe especially he is an alcoholic person. I pray so hard before if I will be beaten it is better I will die).

If the abusers are not related to the victims by bloodline like in-laws, less psychological bonding then abuses are easily perpetrated. The victim will be more adamant in dealing with the undesirable situation as revealed in the study among aging in Hongkong Christian Service (2004).

Neglect. Not Identified as Abuse. Although most elderly do not find neglect as abuse, others would rather believe that to be neglected is better than being financially exploited, a male discussant cited:

Na di mio situacion, nuay kien ta abusa, solo lang iyo. Ta pidi iyo gracias tiene iyo buen visinos, si ta emperma iyo sila ta lleba kumigo na hospital. Ya deha komigo mi mujer. (In my case, nobody will abuse me. I am alone. I thank God I still have neighbors who are good to me. If I am sick, they bring me to the hospital. My wife left me).

In a study conducted by Hong kong Christian Service (2004) neighbors are able to contribute significantly in the identification and prevention of elder abuse. On several occasions, neighbors are helpful and encouraged elderly to seek help or refer to social workers.

Neglect and Financial Abuse. Though most elderly do not find neglect as abuse. Some would rather be neglected than being financially abused. Acierno et al. (2010) cited that isolation can result to self-neglect which is a form of elder abuse. This is seen among elderly who refuse help from their family. There is a greater risk for low self-esteem and depression. One male discussant said:

Kasao kame ya anda lang ele na su anak na primero Marido. Nuay problema si hindi sila bene. Sen lang sus Kere. (No ma'am we are still married, she just went to Davao to stay with her children from her first husband...

it's okay they will not come. What they asked from me is only money...).

Further elaborated that:

Maskin nuay iyo sen ya gasta gayot iyo para keda sila professionals. Ta manda iyo kanila man kunsensya. Si abusa sila o hindi dale sen komigo. Na man Karma sila. (I told my children if even I don't have money, I sent them to school to become professionals. I made them feel guilty if they will abuse me or they will not give me money. They will have karma).

Tolerance. Some elderly tolerate the abuse because of the fear that if the abuser is behind bars no one will take care of him. This is a classic form of battered person syndrome. The abused usually feels protection from the abuser.

It has been observed that abusers of the elderly tend to have more personal problems than non-abusers. Alcohol is involved in nearly 50 % of the reported elderly abuse cases. In one American study based on 328 cases of elder mistreatment, alcohol abuse was a strong correlate of physical and financial abuse. However, allowing alcohol consumption as an excuse for normatively unacceptable behaviors frees the abusers from the blame for willful and abusive acts of violence and exploitation.

Nuay de ke buracho le. Si reporta iyo na pulis Nuay iyo uban na casa. Dehalo lang aguanta ya lang iyo. (It's ok he is drunk anyway. If I am going to report to the police, I have nobody at home. Never mind I can still handle it... <male discussant jokingly said>).

Hong kong Christian Service (2004) in their study on elderly persons found out that a great number of the interviewed elderly stated that it brings them shame to inform other people of their situation, particularly if they are being abused by their very own children. They pay particular concern to their "face", which means that any shameful matters within the household should not be revealed to outsiders. They do not want to "wash dirty linen outside". It's a private family matter, so some who have embarrassing experiences just kept these within the four walls of their homes. The problem is, this encouraged more intense abuse as evidenced by this statement:

Makahuya man kwento na otro si abusado el mga anak pureso no mas ya lang man istorya, bien makahuya sabe el otro hente. (We don't tell honestly of our feelings whether our children are abusive or not we keep it. It is shameful if others will know it).

Other statement corroborating the same included:

Deberasan se hindi kita ta abla na otro hente man kwento lang sus. (That's true we just don't reveal it to others. They will gossip out of it).

Battered person syndrome is a physical and psychological condition that is classified as ICD-9 code 995.81 "Battered person syndrome" NEC. The condition was first researched extensively by Lenore Walker, who used Martin Seligman's learned helplessness theory to explain why abused women stayed in destructive relationships (Walker, 1983). It can occur because of either of the following beliefs and attitudes of some elderly that the abused: (a) believe that the violence was his or her fault; (b) has an inability to place the responsibility for the violence elsewhere; (c) fears for his/her life and/or the lives of his/her children (if present); and (d) has an irrational belief that the abuser is omnipresent and omniscient.

Government's Contribution. From the focus group discussion, most elderly believed that the government is not doing concrete measures to protect the elderly. They believed that the government is supposed to be responsible to design and implement programs to safeguard the interest of the elderly. They added that the government is concerned publicly. Their concerns are only in words not deeds. The following statements poured out their sentiments as:

El gobyerno debe ase Bueno de ila benepisyo kun el mga Viejo y vieja. Debe protekta kun el mga debehes. Dale bien ayuda. (The government should improve the benefits for the old people. They should protect us even we are old. They provide enough help or benefits).

Palta el programa para na mga debehes. O hala pwede se ayuda tu research. Na newspaper lang el benepisyo para del mga debehes. (The government lacks program for us old people. I hope your research ma'am can help us. The benefits are all in the newspaper in reality it's not true).

In the Philippines, the government has taken cognizance of the needs among the elderly that is why Republic Act No. 9257 was implemented. This entitled the seniors to have a twenty percent discount in almost all the basic necessities to include medical or health services, fare in all means of transportations, restaurants and even daily basic groceries. However, this is not much felt among the research participants and wished more concrete and sustainable programs that are evident and felt among the elderly.

Acceptance of Old Age and Death. Everyone is getting older day by day. Everyone who survives his/her young years will eventually get old. In the Philippines, the elderly are generally recognized for their wisdom and life experiences. In real life, many if not most they are often neglected and abused. Though some people are afraid to die, and the topic about death is not talked about, there are some elderly who accept this reality and use this as a mechanism to tolerate abuse. This is a masked feeling of powerlessness wrapped or veiled in the projection of “bahala na” (God will determine)... and death, assumed to be near, becomes a reason to tolerate abuse as by this utterance:

Dehalo ya, vieja ya serka ya iyo muri. (Never mind I am old, soon I will die).

Generally old age makes a person sober, reflective and unable to fight back abuses. This is because of physical prowess and capabilities dwindled with age, and so abuses are readily justified and accepted. Elderly adults often readily accept their times have come. Although they may not be happy to die, they can be reconciled to it (Singh & Nizamie, 2003).

According to Erickson, as the elderly adults enter the last phase of their lives, with a sense of integrity or despair as illustrated death here is accepted without fear, her bitter despair, and personal misfortunes made these succumbed to death readily.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, perceptions on the abuses experienced by the elderly are basically governed by their respective sociocultural experiences from their younger years. Majority of the participants defined and categorized elderly abuse based on identified experiences and grounded on their cultural background. What is classified as elderly abuse in their experiences may not be in some others, but many of them believed that any action diminishes dignity and respect expected to be accorded an elderly person constitutes abuse.

Consequently, the study also revealed that elderly

may experience different types and degree of abuse depending on their perceptions on elderly abuse, living condition, level of powerlessness, and dependence.

The study recommends that further research can be done by expanding this study on the perceptions and reasons on the occurrences of elder abuse to explore the strength and weaknesses of theory building from case studies. The researcher also recommends that there should be a concerted effort to educate and change the attitudes of family, individuals and society to the special needs and challenges of the elderly. This is best achieved through tri-media mechanism or public enlightenment programs and raising awareness as to the nature and extent of elderly abuse. They can begin by exerting effort towards the changing of attitudes and the reduction of stereotyping that is present around the elderly. The media are powerful tool to build positive images about the older persons. Education and public awareness campaigns are also potent mediums for teaching novel information and also transforms behaviors and attitudes, thus a basic strategy for prevention. It can be administered in various ways for instance: seminars, workshops, trainings and for a that targets multidisciplinary teams (doctors, nurses, clinical psychologist, psychiatrist and social workers). A multi-disciplinary approach will be adopted where different professionals will be involved in rendering counseling services and help the victims of abuse cope with the deteriorating mental and psychological effects.

A multi-generational programme must be integrated in the curriculum and school policy particularly in the primary schools where children and young people have a greater impact on internalization such as respect for the elderly. They will be more tolerant to the elderly and avoid mistreating them. The curriculum also aimed to transform negative attitudes that are deep-rooted in society that are about ageing and elderly people.

The government through each barangay should introduce concrete programs where older people will actively lead role in preventing abuse through: (a) creation of support group or self-help program where elderly abuse victims share their experiences, develop their psychological strength that can aid them in coping with fears, self-doubt and improve their self-esteem that would enable them to be productive; (b) set up a community program or age-friendly facility or senior day care center to enhance personal and social life or build social networks; (c) an emergency shelter for victims of abuse; (d) organization advocacy group with members among the youth and elderly that should campaign seriously or fight for attitudinal change; and (e) mandatory reporting of suspicious elderly abuse cases and helpline/ hotline services are readily available at the

barangay level.

The government must also establish for strong laws to protect the older persons and be proactive in reviewing the existing laws intended for the benefits of the elderly.

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